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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 002187

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/SE, NEA/I; BAGHDAD ALSO FOR KOSNETT

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY URGES IRAQI PM MALIKI TO PRESS AHEAD WITH  
POLITICAL REFORMS

REF: A. BAGHDAD 4019

[1](#)B. ANKARA 2157

Classified By: POL Counselor Daniel O'Grady, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. Both PM Erdogan and President Gul encouraged PM Maliki, during his December 24 visit to Ankara, to enact political reforms that will encourage Sunni participation in government, according to an MFA readout. Maliki reportedly understood the political challenges he faces. The Turks expressed satisfaction with the passage of the SOFA but assured Maliki that Turkey has no intention of meddling in Iraqi internal affairs or by-passing him. The two sides agreed to launch the bilateral "High Level Strategic Council" as soon as possible; the Turks expect the first meeting to take place in January. The Turks asked for greater consideration of Turkish companies in Iraqi reconstruction and development tenders, while Maliki asked for Turkish assistance in reconstructing the Iraqi Armed Forces. FM Babacan offered to send Turkish economic experts to Baghdad to advise the GOI on managing the effects of the global financial crisis. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) PM Erdogan and President Gul encouraged Iraqi PM Maliki, during his nine-hour visit to Ankara on December 24, to press ahead with Council of Representative (COR) Reforms, MFA Iraq desk officer Can Oguz told us December 30. The Turks believe that if Maliki listens more to the concerns of other political parties and, in particular, invites Sunni groups to participate in the political process, his position will be strengthened and Iraq will be more stable. Maliki reportedly told Erdogan and Gul that there is a different point of view in Iraq on how to implement federalism. Maliki said he is working for a stronger central government; the Iraqi people understand his intentions, but Sunni groups do not. The Turks advised Maliki that there are political groups arraying against him. Maliki said he was aware of the challenges, characterizing the resignation of Speaker Mashhadani (ref A) as a "test run." (NOTE: Oguz said Turkey is uncertain what Mashhadani's future in Iraqi politics will be, but that his preemptive resignation and parliamentary seat provide him a platform from which to re-engage in the future. END NOTE.)

[1](#)3. (C) The Turks conveyed to Maliki their satisfaction with the passage of the SOFA in Parliament. Gul sought to assure Maliki that Turkey's aim was to facilitate the SOFA passage

and not to meddle in Iraqi internal affairs. Turkey, Oguz said, seeks to have good relations with all Iraqi sides, so long as they are peaceful. Turkey has no intention of by-passing Maliki.

¶4. (C) In addition to the private meetings between Maliki and Erdogan and Maliki and Gul, the Iraqi PM also met privately with FM Babacan, and the two delegations met in expanded meetings. Maliki was accompanied by Iraq's State Minister for External Affairs, the Electricity Minister, and the Trade Minister. The Transportation Minister was nominally part of the Iraqi delegation, but participated separately with Turkish Transport Minister Yildirim in a ceremony marking the delivery of Turkish-built locomotives to Iraq. PM Erdogan hosted a lunch to which he invited the Iraqi ministers' Turkish counterparts, who then met separately in working groups. In delegation meetings, the two sides agreed to launch the "High Level Strategic Council" ("HLDC") -- established by the two PMs during Erdogan's July 2007 visit to Baghdad -- as soon as possible. While officially a "working visit," this visit, said Oguz, with four Iraqi ministers in tow, was basically in line with Turkey's vision for the HLDC. The HLDC will be FM-led, however, and Turkey has invited FM Zebari to Ankara in January. President Gul, for his part, apologized for having had to cancel his visit to Iraq and promised to travel there as soon as his health permits; no date was set.

¶5. (C) According to Oguz, the Turks expressed a sense that Turkey does not always receive a fair share of Iraqi reconstruction and development projects. Maliki was

ANKARA 00002187 002 OF 002

supportive, underlining Turkey's importance to Iraq as a "different kind of neighbor." Oguz said Maliki prioritized strengthening relations with Turkey "in every field," including hydrocarbons, to which Gul attached great importance. (NOTE: The Iraqi Electricity Minister's Turkish counterpart was Energy Minister Guler. Oguz could not provide a read-out on what was discussed by those two in their working group. END NOTE.) Gul also encouraged GOI consideration of an armored personnel carrier tender in Iraq that a Turkish company is competing for. Maliki responded by requesting Turkish assistance with the reconstruction of the Iraqi Armed Forces. Turkey needs a military cooperation framework agreement to do so. It is ready to proceed; the delay is in Baghdad. Oguz asked for continued U.S. urging of the Iraqis to sign such an agreement.

¶6. (C) To Oguz's knowledge, countering the growing Iranian influence in Iraq was not raised specifically by Gul or Erdogan. However, according to Oguz, implicit in the Turkish request for greater consideration of Turkish companies is Turkey's desire to minimize Iran's influence, which has, at times, acted counter to Turkish interests.

¶7. (C) Demonstrating the potential breadth of Turkey-Iraq cooperation, FM Babacan used his meeting with Maliki to focus on economic affairs, offering to send to Iraq Turkish economic experts to help Baghdad manage the effects of the global financial crisis. Babacan noted Turkey's experience handling financial crises and recounted Turkey's economic success since overcoming the last major crisis, in 2002, without the benefit of significant natural resources. Maliki agreed to consider the offer.

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Jeffrey